



February 17, 2017

The Honorable Shelley Hughes, Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Room 125
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for SB 32, Biosimilars

Dear Senator Hughes,

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) is writing this letter in support of SB 32. ASHNHA has been consulting with hospital-based pharmacists and physicians to ensure that the bill would supply the guidance needed to ensure safe and effective treatments for patients, while providing the potential to lower pharmaceutical costs.

Critical to our support for this legislation are the specific communication requirements and timelines for pharmacists associated with dispensing biosimilar medication. The legislation includes a three-day timeline for the pharmacist to notify the prescribing physician and offers flexibility in communication methods to meet the needs of pharmacists in a variety of settings. We believe that SB 32 strikes the right balance for notification and communication.

We support the original legislation as written and oppose any requirements for "prior consent," requiring a pharmacist to gain additional consent from a prescriber who has already authorized substitution in a valid prescription. Such a requirement would impose an unnecessary administrative burden on pharmacists and prescribers that would conflict with federal law, potentially delay the dispensing of needed medication to patients with serious illnesses, and raise concerns among patients that the lower-cost biosimilars the FDA has determined to be interchangeable may somehow be less safe or inferior to their reference products. We urge that the existing notification and consent provisions be maintained.

Biosimilars and interchangeable biological products offer potential for increasing accessibility and affordability as they provide competition for biologic drugs in a similar way that generic drugs do for brand-name drugs. We believe that the original language of SB 32 protects patients and will benefit the state of Alaska. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support this legislation moving forward.

Sincerely,

Becky Hultberg
President/CEO